

REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR JOHN REYNOLDS 10th OCTOBER

DON'T FORGET - YOU CHOOSE TO HELP THE COUNCIL SET ITS BUDGET

Residents are being reminded that they are being put in the budget setting driving seat by Cambridgeshire County Council.

'You Choose' is a county-wide survey, launched from September 5, that is asking residents to put themselves in the seat of councillors in making decisions where to invest and save money. Residents have until October 17 to visit the County Council website and complete the survey.

A series of road shows are also being held next week for people to have their say.

Thursday 11 Oct 10am - 1pm Ely Library
Thursday 11 Oct 2pm - 4pm Linton Children's Centre
Thursday 11 Oct 2pm - 5pm Ramsey Library
Friday 12 Oct 10am - 1pm St Neots Library
Friday 12 Oct 2pm - 5pm Bar Hill Library

Cambridgeshire County Council has to make £37 million in savings next year against a backdrop of having saved £40 million last year and a further £42 million this current financial year. These savings have to be made while supporting and investing in services such as adult social care, protecting children, boosting the economy and looking after roads and transport.

The website www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/budgetconsultation and face to face surveys allow residents to show the County Council what decisions they would make regarding Council Tax levels and individual service levels and budgets.

If people are unable to complete the web survey, comments about the Council's priorities or ideas for delivering services better or more efficiently can be sent to Budget Consultation, RES1201 Shire Hall, Castle Hill, Cambridge CB3 0AP.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "Councils across the land have some hard decisions to make and we want Cambridgeshire residents to have a big say in ours. The County Council services are very wide-ranging and touch everyone's lives. From looking after young people and adults during vulnerable periods in their lives to maintaining the County's roads and recycling rubbish. The County Council has worked hard to be efficient and we saved £40 million last year while still investing in things residents and businesses say matter like superfast broadband, a new station for Cambridge and improving education and skills in Fenland.

"But Cambridgeshire is not immune from national budget problems or increasing demands for services. The County Council must find around £37 million in savings in the next financial year. You Choose is an easy to use survey which will put residents right at the heart of making those decisions and we can use this to help shape our budget and priorities for the future."

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/budgetconsultation>).

PS This is not the only form of consultation we are doing. You can find out the results of our preliminary consultations using the Consultation Database at <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CMSWebsite/Apps/Consultations/Recent.aspx>. We are also doing a statistically robust and representative survey as well as this general consultation with the public.

APPRENTICESHIPS DOUBLE IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The number of people in Cambridgeshire becoming apprentices has nearly doubled over the last two years. Government figures show an increase of 97 per cent in the number of people seeking this alternative way of gaining employment, progressing in an existing role or retraining.

Nationally there has been an increasing focus on apprenticeships by the Government, which has seen cross party support to develop more choices for employers and those entering or progressing their employment. Changes in the law will mean that young people will need to continue in education or training until the age of 18. This will affect all young people in secondary school.

This does not just mean that young people need to stay on in school. It means they will be able to continue in education, to start a job with training, or to enter an apprenticeship training programme. Jobcentre Plus and schools careers advisers offer information and advice, together with other partners. In Cambridgeshire, Melbourn Village College had the highest proportion of students moving into apprenticeships at age 16.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "It is very encouraging that young people, adults and employers are seeing the benefit of apprenticeships as a valued route into employment, progressing within an existing role, and as a form of retraining into other areas. Apprenticeships have proven to contribute to increased productivity for businesses and increased self esteem for individuals, as well as a nationally recognised qualification. They are also available to start at intermediate level with further opportunities up to the equivalent of a degree. The County Council is wholly supportive of apprenticeship schemes which lead to better skills for people and local businesses, as well as providing the opportunity for individuals to earn while they learn."

Anyone interested in becoming, or employing an apprentice should log onto:
www.apprenticeships.org.uk

BAILIFF AGREES TO CLEAN UP HIS ACT AFTER TRADING STANDARDS INVESTIGATION

The director of a debt recovery company has agreed to change his business practices and pay nearly £15,000 back to firms across the country following an investigation by Cambridgeshire Trading Standards. Nigel Marsh the director of Armitage Credit Control Ltd which is based in March, narrowly avoided legal action by Cambridgeshire County Council when he appeared at Peterborough Magistrates Court and he agreed to sign an Enterprise Act undertaking regarding his future conduct in relation to his debt collection business. Marsh also agreed to pay back £14,620 to six businesses and meet the Council's investigation costs of £5,000.

Cambridgeshire Trading Standards launched an investigation after it received complaints from businesses across the country that had employed Armitage Credit Control to collect commercial debts. The debts were collected but then not passed on to the clients.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "This was a particularly tricky investigation for officers who had to obtain statements not only from those people who had lost money but also the individuals and companies that owed the debts and paid Armitage Credit Control. Nigel Marsh had to agree to sign the undertaking before a judge in open court. This is a fantastic result, especially in terms of getting the money back for the people who had lost out and the outcome is a tribute to the work of Cambridgeshire Trading Standards to support and protect the small businesses that otherwise would have had to write off significant amounts of money because of the activities of Armitage Credit Control Ltd."

BUSWAY BUILDS ON SUCCESS NEW RESEARCH SHOWS

New research shows that the Cambridgeshire Busway continues to succeed, with passenger numbers significantly ahead of expectation and many people choosing to leave their car at home and take the bus instead.

A survey commissioned by the County Council and Akins found that passenger numbers for the first year were running around 40% ahead of forecast. With up to 80% of passengers having access to a car, but choosing to ride the Busway instead.

The Busway is attracting passengers who are making the journey for a variety of reasons including commuters, students and people heading into Cambridge for medical reasons - and nearly half the passengers are catching the bus on a daily basis with more than 70% of users staying loyal to the service since its launch.

The quality of the buses, the smooth ride and access to free wifi are also proving very popular with passengers many of whom said that using the Busway had also cut their journey time.

For full details of the survey, go to:

<http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/around/usingbusway/history/buswayusersurvey/spring2012.htm>

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Since the Busway opened it has proved a great success. This survey confirms that just as we expected passengers are using it for all kinds of reasons and for many different kinds of journey. What is particularly pleasing is that so many people are choosing to leave their car at home and take the bus instead."

"They clearly like the experience and are returning day after day to use this quick, clean and efficient public transport system to and from Cambridge and the surrounding market towns such as St Ives for shopping and leisure purposes."

In the first year 2.5 million journeys were made on the Busway - 750,000 more than forecast by the operators. There were 179,196 passenger journeys in August 2011 and this has now risen to 243,450 in August 2012. This demand led to a rapid increase in service provision with operators providing more buses on the Busway.

BUS PASS LONGEVITY

A UK National Travel Survey study has claimed that having a free bus pass could help people live longer because it encourages them to get more exercise. It said that people who claim their free bus pass after the age of 60 are more active when they leave the house, enabling them to stay fitter than people who use their cars to get around.

CARERS TO BE MONITORED

Carers will be electronically monitored in Cambridgeshire to prevent appointments being missed or cut short. Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council are introducing a system where contracted agency carers would be required clock in and out. The technology is intended to ensure care is "delivered as planned".

ERIC PICKLES SECRETARY OF STATE FLIES THE FLAG

Eric Pickles has announced that planning regulations which requires consent for flag flying will be scrapped in England from October 12. Mr Pickles said he was "looking forward" to seeing more flags flying around the country following the change in the rules.

COUNCIL CHIEFS WELCOME A14 CASH

Plans to improve the A14 to help bring forward the Northstowe development have been welcomed by Council chiefs. Cambridgeshire County Council has led a campaign with local MPs and partner councils to urge the Government to bring forward improvements for the congestion blighted road.

Transport Secretary has announced various schemes in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have been successful in gaining Pinch Point funding. As part of the £22 million package the announcement included improvements to the A14 between junctions 31 and 32, Girton to Milton. This would see reductions in congestion by widening the A14 between the junctions and installing three sign gantries across the width of the carriageway.

The widening of the A14, Girton to Histon, to three lanes in the eastbound direction, would complement the planned works at Girton under the £20m allocation being made available as part of the A14 "Challenge" work. This was identified as a priority for the Cambridgeshire area, given the potential for such improvements to reduce congestion and improve safety on one of the busiest stretches of the A14.

The A14 improvements support the Northstowe Phase One development, which will create over 500 jobs and 1,480 new homes as well as the gateways of Felixstowe and Harwich ports. It also supports the outputs from the A14 Challenge study, providing early improvements until the major improvements to the A14, announced by the Transport Secretary on 18 July 2012, come forward from 2018.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said: "The A14 was completely off the agenda until we led a charge with local MPs and partner councils to get much needed improvements on this congestion blighted road. I am delighted that the Government has not only listened to us but has been working with us to bring forward improvements. We welcome the confirmation of these measures by the Minister which is part of a much larger scheme of improvements needed for this road. It will help bring forward the Northstowe development which is needed to help boost the local economy, create jobs and provide affordable homes. Cambridgeshire's economy is recognised as being able to help kick start the national economy and unblocking the A14 and building Northstowe plays an important part in that."

PUPILS URGE DRIVERS TO STEER CLEAR OF THE 'KEEP CLEARS'

Primary school children have been invited to come up with ideas for a new radio commercial to raise awareness of selfish parking outside their schools. The competition - launched by Cambridgeshire County Council - aims to raise awareness of the problems that thoughtless parking and congestion cause each day at schools across the county. An attention grabbing commercial based on the winning entry will feature local school children and will be aired on Heart 103, with the voices of the children speaking directly to everyone who parks inconsiderately near schools.

Prizes for schools include cycle and scooter racks donated by Cyclepods Ltd, the makers of eco-friendly, funky cycle storage. The winning ad will be aired for 4 weeks in January 2013. The majority of drivers doing the school run park legally and considerately. However, there are a few who think it is acceptable to park on the zig zag lines for a few minutes, blocking the road, reducing pedestrian visibility and endangering children. Schools are one of the worst areas affected as problem parkers often park on the zig zag (school Keep Clear marks) and double yellow lines outside school gates or obstruct the school crossings, making it difficult and dangerous for young pedestrians to cross the road.

ELY CROSSING BACKED BY COUNCIL

Council chiefs have agreed to back plans for a new by-pass for Ely which would help reduce congestion in the station area of the city and help economic growth. The plans for the £30.7 million by-pass (known as option B) would see a 1.7km long single carriageway by-pass spanning the River Great Ouse and rail lines joining Stuntney Causeway to Angel Drove.

Due to extra trains and upgrades being made by the rail industry the level crossing, which is already a traffic bottleneck with the barriers being closed for an average of 35 minutes, would become even more of a problem and will in the future be closed on average over 40 minutes in every hour. The cabinet considered five alternative schemes including a £30.8 million underpass.

They also debated the strong concerns from English Heritage about views of the Cathedral. They also heard representation from the Cathedral and the rail industry which backed a by-pass solution being recommended. The by-pass could be open by the end of 2015 and the next stage will be detailed public consultation with a planning application to be made in the new year.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "Ely is a thriving area but currently the route through by the station is strangling traffic flow and the economy and this is set to get worse as the level crossing will be shut for much of the time. Getting the right solution is a challenge and involves trying to balance intrusion on the local historic environment while relieving congestion and encouraging growth."

"The bypass option B is the most effective in relieving congestion in Ely provides the best value for money and, by allowing the improvement of the areas around the station, has the greatest additional benefits. In contrast the underpass while preserving the heritage setting only achieves the limited transport objective of relieving existing congestion at the level crossing. It would rule out any significant improvement of the station area, has no additional transport benefits, makes no provision for future traffic growth and is poor value for money."

CAMBRIDGESHIRE CATERING AND CLEANING SERVICES 2012 AWARDS

School caterers, cleaners and caretakers were amongst those honoured at Cambridgeshire Catering and Cleaning Services (CCS) fourth annual awards. The awards were presented by the County Council Chairman, Councillor John Powley and were attended by the winners, plus a number of Head teachers and CCS staff. 11 different awards were presented, including:

Primary School Caterer of the Year - Celia Griffiths, Pendragon Primary School

Marketing Award - Tracy Brooks, Emma Good and Karen Pledger, Arbury Primary School

Hospitality Employee of the Year - Lyndsey Hall, Café at Cambridge Central Library

Cleaning Employee of the Year - Sylvia Seymour, Huntingdon Nursery School

Caretaking Employee of the Year, Alan Hambley, Ely St Johns Primary School

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "These awards recognise those individuals who have gone the extra mile in providing services to schools and the Council and the energy and commitment they have shown in their work".

EUROPEAN FUNDING TO STRENGTHEN OLDER PEOPLE'S NETWORKS IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

A Cambridgeshire County Council project to help strengthen networks for older people has been awarded funding from the European Commission. The project called SeNS (Seniors Network Support) will work alongside European partners to create better lives for older people by using the skills and knowledge of support agencies and older people themselves to help others in their communities. Cambridgeshire County Council will contribute through pilot projects in the community that focus on active ageing, healthy living and IT skills for older people.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds said "The SeNS project will allow us to offer new skills to our older generations in ways that will be engaging and stimulating for the groups taking part. The new networks created will provide a sustainable welfare support structure for older people in Cambridgeshire, helping to support Council services working to increasingly tight budgets"

SeNS is funded until the September 2014 by the European Commission through its Interreg 4b funding stream. INTERREG IVB NWE is a financial instrument of the European Union's Cohesion Policy. It funds projects which support transnational cooperation. The aim is to find innovative ways to make the most of territorial assets and tackle shared problems of Member States, regions and other authorities.

Support our campaign for better broadband.

Get Cambridgeshire connected - Register here today

www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk <http://www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk>

It only takes a minute and will show the demand for better broadband.



17,000 REGISTER FOR CONNECTING CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Join the seventeen thousand people who have already registered for our major campaign to bring superfast broadband to Cambridgeshire. The speed at which the Connecting Cambridgeshire campaign has reached the milestone total shows how strongly householders and business people feel about getting better broadband.

Local County Councillor John Reynolds, said: "This is a fantastic response to our campaign to get Cambridgeshire connected and clearly shows there is huge demand for better broadband, which is vital for our businesses and communities to thrive".

"We need many more people to register their support for the campaign if they are to secure vital investment from broadband suppliers to bring superfast broadband to the Cambridgeshire. The more people that register the fact they want superfast broadband the more chance of it being delivered, so I would urge everyone to 'click' for Cambridgeshire and help us to make it happen. There is no commitment in expressing your interest in a better Broad Band service, and all you have to do is to visit the Council's website at

www.connectingcambridgeshire.co.uk

The detailed lists of proposals are available from j.e.reynolds@ntlworld.com
Visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/>

CARE FOR YOUR CAREER? HOW ABOUT A CAREER IN CARING?

The County Council's Adult Social Care Services have joined forces with home care agencies in Cambridgeshire to organise a number of recruitment events which will highlight the benefits of a career in caring for others.

The events are designed to highlight the benefits of working as a care professional, how people can progress their career and to provide details of terms and conditions and job opportunities across the county. Future events will include representatives from JobCentre Plus and the Apprenticeship Scheme.

Local County Councillor, John Reynolds said: "Professional careers are the backbone of our homecare services which enable people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible and to improve the quality of life for people who need a range of services and support.

"The demand for home care services in Cambridgeshire grows relentlessly and we have worked with the home care agencies to organise these events which will highlight the benefits of working in the care profession."

The first 4 events are:

- * October 15, Burgess Hall, St Ives between 1.30-4.30 pm
- * October 18, Arbury Community Centre, Cambridge, 9.30-1.00 pm
- * October 24, March Library, 1.00-5.00 pm
- * October 26, Ely Library, 1.00-5.00 pm

Staff from Cambridgeshire County Council Adult Social Care Services and representatives from Care UK; Beaumont Healthcare; Circle Support; Mears; Radis and Fenland Premier Care, will be at the events.

Future events will include other providers who work with the County Council throughout the county.

Paul Fletcher, Branch Manager, at Care UK, said: "A career in caring for others can be extremely fulfilling, well rewarded and offer good professional development. We are delighted that the County Council is working with us and other care agencies in Cambridgeshire to highlight the benefits of this type of work."

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